

# The LENINIST

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## Link the struggles

**A**FTER years of declaring working class militancy dead, the bourgeoisie has become worried by the recent spate of strikes and threats of strikes. There has been much editorialising in the 'quality' press warning of a coming 'summer of discontent' and a return to the 'bad old times' of the 1970s. What has particularly concerned the ruling class has been the contradictory effects of the Tory anti-trade union laws.

Trade union tops now spend tens of thousands of pounds of their members dues on securing legal advice and doing everything to avoid falling foul of the courts. Yet because this makes effective trade unionism impossible there has been an increasing trend towards circumventing officials and taking matters into rank and file hands. **"Tight laws regulating official strikes may be making wildcat action more common"** noted the high Tory *Economist*.

All the evidence suggests that we are entering a new phase in the class struggle. Thatcher's luck seems to be running out. Her party is deeply divided over relations with the European Community and there is a welling up of working class anger – the introduction of the Poll Tax to England and Wales can only add to that anger and help to generalise it.

In her first ten years Thatcher managed to pick off one isolated section of the working class after another. Key sections like steelworkers, printers and seafarers fell victim to the Tory offensive. But it was the miners' Great Strike that was crucial. The government used every device to ensure that the miners remained isolated. With the help of trade union officialdom trouble over the Docks Labour Scheme – which triggered two strikes in 1984 – and on the rails was defused. As a result the miners were beaten and soundly beaten at that. The NUM has since been decimated through redundancies and the UDM split: it is now seeking a future through a merger with the TGWU.

There can be no doubt that the defeat of the miners cast a distinct, new realist shadow over the entire working class movement. Labourism began its attempts to create a Thatchnockite political platform, and militancy – even the strike weapon itself – stood discredited.

This could not be a permanent state of affairs. Capitalism lives by increasing the rate of exploitation and, as day follows night, this inevitably produces working class resistance. The strikes affecting the car industry, the post office, the hospitals, etc last year showed that the working class was beginning to shrug off the defeat of the miners. Confidence was reviving. Backs against the wall defensive struggles against job slashing employers began to give way to workers

themselves going on to the offensive.

Naturally this pattern is uneven and full of contradictions. Nonetheless there can be no doubt that if we look at the situation today there are all the signs that the negative aspects of the miners defeat have now definitively been left behind.

For communists this is something we must wholeheartedly welcome. We know that socialism will never come via parliament or courtesy of some revolutionary sect. The working class will liberate itself through its own combativity. A revival of combativity – even around mundane day to day issues – gives life to the question of which class rules. Strange then that some, such as *Marxism Today's* Charlie Leadbeater and the RCP's Mike Freeman, feel compelled to talk down the rise in militancy. Optimism concerning the revival in strike action is apparently a case of the left living in the past and a failure to face up to the harsh realities of Thatcherite Britain.

Writing in the *Financial Times* the Euro Leadbeater insists that the common characteristic of recent disputes is that they are defensive, and defensive of old and outdated practices at that! The employers' offensive, which has introduced sweeping changes in working practices in the private sector, is, he says, being carried into the public sector. Freeman echoes this in the RCP's *the next step*.

What is the truth? Yes, the employers are trying to push through measures that will increase the rate of exploitation – ie so-called 'flexible working practices' – in the docks, the electricity supply industry, on London's bus and underground system, on the rails, etc. Nonetheless, in general these workers are at the same time demanding compensation in the form of higher pay and/or lower hours (registered dockers are the exception which proves the rule here). But what we are seeing today is more important and on a far broader scale than resistance to new working practices.

There is the possibility that different disputes could come together to create a strike wave. Spurred on by rising inflation one section of the class after another is entering into the fray against the employers (which is in many cases the government). This has given rise to fears on the bosses side of what they call an inflationary cycle, where wages rise in response to price increases and in turn cause new price increases because of higher wage costs.

So the character of the unfolding struggles is not as one sided as Leadbeater suggests. The mood is not a backs against the wall stand against an employers' offensive. The confidence and militancy of the working class is on the rise:

there is a growing willingness to take or threaten strike action.

The RCP is, if anything, even more dismissive than Leadbeater. There is no revival of working class militancy, only journalistic excess. Quote: the **"more radical newspapers are eagerly looking out for any industrial discontent to spoil the atmosphere at the close of the Thatcher decade"** while the right wing media are exaggerating trade union militancy in an attempt to **"discredit the Labour Party at the moment when Neil Kinnock's fortunes are on the rise."** (*The next step* May 12 1989)

While slating the SWP (from which, via the RCG, it originated) it is transparently clear that the RCP has its own version of the self fulfilling downturn theory. According to it the official labour movement, including the Labour Party, is 'dead'. (How the dead experience a 'rise' in their 'fortunes' we'll leave to the RCP). Not surprisingly such nonsense will not ring true with any serious working class activist. Students who have no experience of the labour movement – ie, most RCP members – are a different matter. To keep them on the boil and in the 'party', reality must be denied and a fantasy world created. This method is reminiscent of Gerry Healy's WRP, which made it a point of doctrine that Britain was in the grip of a revolutionary situation. The mirror image world of the RCP is one where the balance of class forces is 'decisively' in favour of the employers and if workers are taking any action it is out of despair rather than a conviction that anything can be gained.

As we have already indicated we take a different view. Although the conservatism of the trade union bureaucracy has been strengthened by five years of Labour's social contract and Thatcher's ten years of union bashing, at a rank and file level things point to a growing confidence and determination to fight.

The reasons for this are varied. First, there have been a string of defeats over the last ten years but these have been defeats of isolated sections. This picking off one section after another suited the Tories but limited the impact of defeat and meant that our class has not suffered a defeat of a strategic nature.

Second, in the midst of its overall stagnation, the last few years have seen the British economy experience an upward oscillation. In spite of the two million officially unemployed a shortage of labour has developed. This is entirely the fault of the Tories and their capitalist system. The 'training schemes' have had nothing to do with training. They were designed to massage down unemployment statistics and as a means of social control. The unemployed were intimidated and kept off the streets but not trained. Hence in certain

areas – notably in South East England – there is increasing competition for labour and therefore the possibility of workers gaining concessions.

Third, boasts about conquering inflation have proved hollow. In May the government admitted that the inflation rate had reached 8% and was set to continue upwards. Lawson has attempted to hold back inflation with savage increases in interest rates. For all workers inflation has eroded living standards. For new members of what Thatcher calls the property owning democracy, ie the middle and upper sections of the working class, interest rate rises have meant that they find themselves at a stroke £10 or £20 out of pocket every week.

These are the main factors which have come together to create the situation we see today. So what should militants do? Militants must not only push for strike action now, when so many other sections are engaged in or are threatening to take strike action. They must also develop their own organisational structures which can circumvent the dead hand of official trade unionism. (As an aside here it is interesting to note that *Socialist Worker* calls for this in its May 13 edition, yet – as readers of *The Leninist* will be only too aware – the SWP does not practice what it preaches. For example, its members involved in the health disputes last year were the most vocal opponents of creating a national health workers' rank and file movement).

Unless rank and file organisation is built, defeat threatens. For all their talk, trade union tops are more concerned with protecting union funds, buildings, chauffeur driven cars and fat expense accounts from the attentions of the courts and the sequestrators than pursuing the class struggle. Because of this it is also essential to support political demands which can provide an alternative to the new realism of the trade union bureaucracy and at the same time help to overcome sectionalism and rally the working class as a whole against the bosses as a class.

- For dockers: strike with or without the support of Todd, Morris and Connolly. Demand that the Docks Labour Scheme be retained and extended to all dockers.

- For London Transport workers: fuse the struggles of bus and tube workers. Draw in all other public transport workers whether they are organised by TSSA, the NUR or Aslef, whether they work in the public or the privatised sector.

- For rail workers, engineers, Post Office workers, DSS workers and all others: national all out, not selective, action.

Of course all this will lead to a head on confrontation with the law. The rank and file organisation on the London underground has sought to avoid this by trying to

ensure the anonymity of their leaders. This is inventive and admirable. Nonetheless a fight with the law cannot be avoided. Sooner rather than later the courts will be called in to crush rank and file organisation and rank and file leaders. When this happens it is absolutely essential that militants have a clearly worked out plan.

There are important lessons here from the past. On July 21 1972 the courts ordered the imprisonment of five rank and file dock workers, Cornelius Clancy, Anthony Merrick, Bernie Steer, Vic Turner and Derek Watkins. Militant dockers and their supporters spurned the pleas for moderation emanating from the TUC and the Labour Party. Instead they called for active solidarity.

Across the country tens and hundreds of thousands of engineers, car workers, builders, miners and other workers heeded their call. By July 26 there was what amounted to an unofficial general strike. Faced with this tremendous pressure from below, concerned lest it got completely out of control, the TUC General Council voted for a one day general strike for July 28. It did not happen. It did not need to. The Tory government called in the Official Solicitor, who speedily secured the release of those who had universally come to be known as the Pentonville 5.

The lessons of 1972 must be taken to heart and creatively applied to the conditions of today. The demand must be raised to smash the Tories anti-trade union laws. In this way the sectional struggles over pay and conditions will have a common focus and the potential to combine into a generalised strike.

We can expect no help from the official labour movement. Quite the opposite in fact. The TUC, Kinnock and the Labour Party are still in headlong flight to the right. All Kinnock says he wants to do is to run capitalism better than the Tories. To achieve this he will do everything he can to undermine working class struggles. Already he has rapped Michael Meacher's knuckles for having dared to suggest that a Labour government would repeal the anti-trade union laws.

Social democracy – the ideas of the bourgeoisie in the organised working class – must be defeated if we are really going to take on the bosses and their system. This cannot be done by merging with it as Trotskyites and 'official communists' have done, nor by wishing it away as does the RCP. What is needed is a genuine Communist Party which is able to combine principle with mass work. That is what *The Leninist* is dedicated to achieve.

Jack Conrad





Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:  
for a genuine Communist Party

EVENTS in China are still unfolding. Students have decided to call off their occupation of Tiananmen Square, Zhao Ziyang has been denounced, but the final result is far from certain. Though whatever the outcome no one should underestimate its importance. The Chinese are a great people, a fifth of humanity, their revolution was great, second only to October.

Gorbachev and his *Morning Star*, NCP and CPB echos in Britain have done their best to downplay what is going on in China by calling it an "internal affair" or a "protest". This reveals a complete lack of proletarian internationalism and a miserable diplomatic attempt not to upset the Chinese leadership. Real friends of socialism in China tell the truth no matter what.

•We have seen far more than a protest but less than the "revolution" the silly Euro paper, *7 Days*, editorialises about. There has been a *rebellion* of the Chinese people against the bureaucratic form of the Chinese socialist state. Demands for democracy are just and in the interests of socialism.

•The masses displayed enormous courage and discipline. They sang the *Internationale* and carried the red flag. This bodes well for a future when the state is transformed from being the master of society into its servant. But, given the spontaneity of the popular movement, the entrenchment of the corrupt leadership could throw the Chinese people – as has been the case with the Poles and Magyars – into the arms of forces espousing westernism and counterrevolution. What is vital therefore is a leadership which gives the masses a *conscious* communist perspective. We will not "support" a movement "regardless of its political character" (*The next step* May 26 1989). The Chinese revolution was a huge and precious gain for all workers and must be defended unconditionally. Those who refuse to do this have no right to call themselves communists.

•Bureaucratic socialism has created a chasm between those who rule formally and those who actually do. It has also corrupted those who in their youth lived the life of devoted revolutionaries. The leaders of the Chinese party and state now stand exposed as an isolated clique. While a million demonstrated in Tiananmen Square, Li Peng could only use helicopter gunships to distribute leaflets (threatening an army clampdown). This is the approach of the bureaucrat determined to hold onto privilege, not that of the communist who made the revolution in 1949.

•The masses will never forget that they have the power, if they are determined and united, to make history. Once the masses moved, Beijing was brought to a standstill and a deep split was created in the bureaucratic leadership of the Communist Party of China. With communist consciousness they will shake the world.

•China has been pursuing its own version of perestroika for ten years now. Results have been significant: GNP has grown on average by 10% per annum. But there is also inflation, unemployment and a growing class differentiation. The urban masses have seen little improvement in living standards since the early 1980s. Yet a whole layer of party and government officials, well placed peasant farmers and city merchants have grown very rich and clearly have an interest in constituting themselves as a capitalist *ruling* class.

•The strengthening of the forces of capitalist restorationism will also happen in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries intent on introducing 'market socialism'. Yet, because China is still extremely backward, the market can still produce positive results. Its bureaucratic socialism has *not* run out of all possibilities. This is not the case in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's perestroika cannot revitalise the Soviet economy, only genuine mass socialist democracy can do that.

*The Editor*

## LETTERS

### Moral Revolution?

Sometimes *The Leninist* uses the term bureaucrat to mean a 'wing' of the CPSU, sometimes to describe the CPSU in its entirety; always as a term of abuse for those forces against which the Soviet working class is supposed to be rising up in a political revolution. Whichever use you refer to, whether one of these three or some other, I think the term is simply too abstract and monolithic.

Funnily enough, Gorbachev himself is addicted to the concept too, though for different motives. Glasnost is a double headed tactical weapon. Ever since the April 1985 Plenum Gorbachev has been using the term bureaucracy or bureaucrat as a swear word to describe anyone who opposes his reforms and westernising.

Because what has happened is that the figure of the bureaucrat and the party official have become inseparable. So it's no surprise to see that recruitment into the party has entered very steep decline. People identify the party as a whole with the 'bureaucracy', ie with the causes of everything that is seen to be wrong, or not working. This is the power of an abstraction.

It has helped create a deeply demoralised and ailing society, and an unstable situation in which the enemies of socialism conclude that their hour has at last arrived. The real crisis phenomena in the economy in some senses the second place to a crisis of confidence in the very ability of the system itself to maintain an orderly existence for the population; witness the nationalist unrest, the propagation of all kinds of deviations in the media and so on. The blame for this rests squarely on Gorbachev. He sowed the wind and will sooner or later reap the whirlwind.

I say that the problem is not a structural one emanating from class/production antagonisms etc, but a *functional* disorder arising from the degeneration from some perfectly workable mechanisms, methods which have achieved good results in the past and can do so again.

It is understandable that people should try to explain these disorders that by suggesting that there is something inherently wrong with the structures of economic life which underlie this phenomena. But is that truly the case? Certainly there is no shortage of evidence that each area of bureaucracy is responsible for great harm. But is that bureaucracy harmful in itself, or on the other hand because because it is applied in a distorted, degenerate fashion? In other words, is the tool wrong for the job or is it being used in the wrong way?

My reply would be that it is not so much a methodological problem as a personal problem. The methods have worked properly and can be made to do so again, but only if the people who use them are made to think and work in the correct way. I know that this is probably heresy on any number of counts.

First, it doesn't sound very Marxist at all; but all processes it seems to me are not governed by the laws of dialectical and historical materialism. At each and every stage the impact of old fashioned, unquantifiable human nature must be felt.

Second, I do realise despite appearances that you cannot simply make people different by edict, nor can you pretend that we are

living again in the period of war communism, crash industrialisation or whatever. But I believe that communist ideals, and surely we do know what we mean by them, can be applied to the problems of any particular stage in the path to communism.

It is the *absence* of those ideals, or rather their progressive distortion/degeneration that is at the root of the crisis, which is therefore not a crisis of structures but a crisis of individual and collective moral responsibility.

I have little time for people who from the comfort of their armchairs are content to label the entire 19 million members of the CPSU as 'bureaucrats', and talk in abstract and nebulous terms about the necessity of political revolution by the working class. What the USSR needs is not a political revolution but a *moral* revolution, a return to the high ideals of the Bolsheviks but modified in the light of the mistakes that have been made.

MG Malkin  
Sussex

### Poland

The biggest problem in Poland today is the change of generations. The Polish Communist Party is very old, only a tiny part of the members are less than 20-25 years old! The youth totally disbelieve the false promises; the most active decide to emigrate – even today after the important democratic changes they do not believe that in the next few years Poland will become a 'normal' democratic country.

I am especially unhappy about those Polish youth who decide to emigrate to Federal Germany – they search in their families for German ancestors, and travel saying that they are Germans – but the true causes are purely economic. They close their eyes and minds to World War II, to Polish history, which is full of German and Russian imperialism.

I think that the unification of the two German states is a certainty, and the only question is when. And what will become of our country, having such a weak economy? Do our masters think about that? I doubt it; they are only opportunist bureaucratic officials who play at administering the state.

P Maciej  
Warsaw

### Exciting

My impressions of the recent Leninist education weekend were very positive. The sessions I found stimulating and well debated. It is this standard that should be occurring amongst Leninists everywhere, but although some of the CPs have education classes up here they are either for members only or are staid and dead.

Those who claim to be Marxist-Leninists such as a few Straight Leftist people are just involved in intrigue and peripheral solidarity group politics whilst leaving the 'heavy mob' who they genuinely fear to continue to run their party and exercise a negative influence on the movement.

The Communist Party of Turkey May Day rally and the Leninist rally were well run and exciting. Unfortunately, what should be the accepted standard is very much the exception. I hope the May Day march went well down in London. I am full of admiration for exiles

who can turn out so many committed cadre...

My only criticism of the school was the continual lobbing of the Labour Party like a paper dart – some comrades seemed genuinely astonished that someone 'in that' had attended. However, as I argued with a couple of comrades I do not see the Labour Party as the solution but the problem, and I see the need to smash social democracy.

Obviously, it is here that we fundamentally disagree but I certainly would not insult *The Leninist* but suggesting that I am hanging around waiting for you form a genuine Communist Party so the likes of me can hop onto a ready made structure. No, I honestly cannot see a revolutionary party being set up in the way you suggest, but we can discuss this again.

Ian Wishart  
Glasgow

### Armed Struggle

I was an Inla prisoner in France and have now been given political asylum in [...]. I would appreciate your views on the following strategy in Ireland: Because British imperialism is controlled by a small oligarchy of international financier families, it has been suggested that this source of ultimate power be made the military targets of the armed struggle. The demand would be for the withdrawal of British troops, and until the demand was met, the armed struggle would be directed against the oligarchy families of financial dominance.

The logic of this military campaign would be that the strikes are at the decision-making core of power to effect change. In contrast, the elimination of a general, a judge, a cabinet minister etc is really only hitting a removable part, one that can be replaced with no more than a truck load of British soldiers after a bombing.

In contrast, the heads of families and heirs of the five or six banking families are the true ultimate source of the power of imperialism. It is doubtful that these people would willingly endure the equivalent of front line battlefield dangers to themselves for any prolonged period of time.

Therefore, for an existing armed struggle against imperialism, would it not make sense to strike directly at the persons who are the financial core of power of that imperialism? Lenin discussed this briefly in a comment on the German capitalists who were responsible for the deaths of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. The proper exercise of all other forms of mass struggle and political action are not precluded in this circumstance, but merely the selection of the most significant target for the aspect of the armed struggle.

Pete Francis

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

### WRITE OR RING

If you would like to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone us on 01-431 3135.



# Ever higher



Following Lenin's lead: the Sixth Offensive

**E**VERY year, the communists of *The Leninist* conduct an intense period of fund raising known as the Summer Offensive. So far, each Summer Offensive has been a step forward. Each year more comrades than ever before have taken part, higher individual targets have been set and bigger totals raised.

This year, we are aiming to again take another step forward. This Summer Offensive, our sixth, aims to raise £20,000 in the months of June and July, a doubling of our total from last year. We will have to spread participation in the Summer Offensive far wider and qualitatively enhance the culture of self sacrifice that previous campaigns have created to achieve this target. Part and parcel of this will be the more ambitious targets individual comrades will set themselves; targets that will stretch them to the limits.

Some readers may think that placing such demands on our comrades must badly disrupt the work of the organisation, even demoralise and drive away potential support. In fact, the annual Summer Offensive of *The Leninist* acts to *hone* our organisation; to give direction and impetus to our work throughout the year. The Summer Offensive is a political, moral and organisational purge of our body politic, flushing out all that is weak and decaying, along with backward ideas and prejudices.

How can a campaign like this possibly weaken the activity of a communist organisation? How can it do anything other than enhance our work and make us a fitter and more resilient organisation!

That the Summer Offensive has become an organic part of the theory and practice of *The Leninist* is testified to by the fact that this year – for the first time – we have not simply totted up each comrade's pledge, we have set a target figure in advance. This is very necessary.

The work of our organisation has expanded. We have drawn in a whole layer of sympathisers, turned them into members and integrated them into cells. As well as giving us greater potential this has also added to our responsibilities. Education in basic Marxism has been given great emphasis and so has the beginning of mass work by our organisation.

The launch of *Hands off Ireland!* has set the terms of debate for all those wanting to see a mass, principled solidarity movement with the Irish struggle built. At the same time, through the campaign around the June 15 day of strike action against ET and other work

fighting for the rights of unemployed workers, the Unemployed Workers Charter has established itself as the only serious and principled campaign seeking to lay the basis for a National Unemployed Workers Movement. And yet we are only too well aware that this work pales into insignificance compared with what is needed.

The class struggle is on the rise. One section of the working class after another has shown its willingness to fight. What is painfully lacking is a genuine vanguard party. This puts into peril the rising confidence of the working class.

The 'official communists' are visibly disintegrating and dissolving in the right moving social democratic current. Gorbachevism, its betrayal of revolutionary struggles and the danger it represents to the Soviet Union itself has only exacerbated their crisis. As a result today Britain has no Communist Party.

The 'alternatives' are in no position to come forward and take the place of the Communist Party. *Militant* is committed body and soul to Labourism. The SWP is little more than a demoralising debating society, other revolutionary organisations are either hopelessly subservient to Labourism or hopelessly sectarian.

That is why the success of our Summer Offensive is so vital. It is a step towards reorganising our Communist Party of Great Britain. Through it we will be able to expand our technical abilities, reach new people and pay for our planned book on the *British Road to Socialism*.

Above all though the Summer Offensive is a method of steeling the communists who will go on to staff the reformed CPGB. On the basis of the success of the Summer Offensive we will begin the task of transforming *The Leninist* from a London based into a national organisation by sending out selected comrades. So the Summer Offensive is not only about money, it is about people and politics.

Perhaps the overwhelmingly positive feature of last year's Offensive – which raised around £10,500 – was the fact that it had evidently become an *organic* part of the theory and practice of *The Leninist*. In previous years, given the small numbers involved and the fact that the Summer Offensive was a relatively new 'grafting' onto our practice, drawn from the experience of our comrades of the Communist Party of Turkey who run a similar campaign every year, the Offensives did not really show their full potential.

Last year was different. The grafting had started to take. This

year, the Summer Offensive, with the hard work and sacrifice it implies, will be a *habitual* exercise for veterans of the campaign and a *natural* feature of our work which new comrades will fall into.

There are a number of innovations in this year's Offensive which should take in a considerable degree of the slack from previous years and help us draw in ever wider circles of supporters, sympathisers and readers.

- There is no minimum target for non-members. While comrades organised in cells will this year, as in all previous years, be set ambitious minimums to achieve, comrades who we do not organise will be allowed to set their own minimum targets for the campaign. This in no way implies a dilution of the quality of the Summer Offensive; rather, it is a tactic we have decided on in order to help some supporters and sympathisers overcome their trepidation about this inspiring, though perhaps daunting fund drive. We believe that once these comrades take the first step they will surprise themselves with their abilities. In previous years, relatively large numbers in the periphery of *The Leninist* have baulked at the minimum targets set for participation in the campaign. They have as a result consciously or unconsciously distanced themselves from our organisation. By removing the minimum target for non-members, we hope to pull these comrades into the campaign's work and *in practice* show them that the targets others have set themselves are not so daunting after all.

- We are turning over a number of our regular Sunday seminars to the Summer Offensive. The first, on June 4, will be used as the launch of the Offensive and as an opportunity to make an important political statement. The last, on July 30, will not only review the Sixth Offensive; it will also be a commemoration meeting for the founding of our Communist Party in 1920. In the other meetings we will review the work of individual comrades, discuss the schemes they have developed to raise money, problems they have encountered, the special place the Offensive occupies in the theory and practice of our organisation, and so on. (Phone or write for details of meetings).

We know that this year – like last year and every other offensive – we will lose some comrades. Some will be honest and admit they are not up to the requirements of what is needed to be a communist. Others will invent this or that difference. This does not worry us. Nor are we concerned about the honesty or dishonesty of those who go. We are interested in practice, we will make *real* communists to replace them.

Communist organisations strengthen themselves by purging themselves. We are interested in quality not quantity. That is what the Summer Offensive is all about – lifting the quality of our organisation and making communists. Those who cannot meet the demands of the Summer Offensive are not going to be any use in reorganising the Communist Party, let alone in a revolution.

- The Sixth Summer Offensive is the most all-embracing yet!
- The Sixth Summer Offensive will triumph!

Alec Long

Over the weekend of the 'Time To Go' demonstration *The Leninist* is organising a series of three discussion seminars under the overall heading of "Nation and Class". The first, "Twenty years of resistance, twenty years of failure", will try to show why the working class movement has not delivered solidarity to the Irish liberation movement and what can be done to change this situation. The second session will be on "The National Question in the British Isles", which will examine the evolution of the people and nationalities in our islands and the attitude of communists to calls for independence for Ireland, Scotland, Wales etc. The last will deal with the development and problems of the communist movement in Ireland, 'The Tasks of Communists in Ireland'. Readers who wish to register for the seminars, especially if they require accommodation, should do so as soon as possible to facilitate the smooth organisation of the weekend. To register, please send £5 along with your name, address and telephone number to August School, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.

For the previous two weeks the police had been rounding up suspected revolutionaries. In spite of this and in defiance of the Ozal regime between 11,000 and 12,000 workers and students took to the streets of Istanbul to celebrate May Day. Showing their confidence they fought back against police attacks. Although one comrade was killed and 30 badly injured, the workers showed that they are militant and on the rise. Revolution is now on the agenda in Turkey. In light of this the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey is organising a delegation of rank and file trade union activists to visit Turkey between August 17 and August 24. The delegation aims to express solidarity, exchange experiences, give militant workers in Britain a better understanding of the situation in Turkey. Each member of the delegation will cost £300. Individuals and organisations are urged to support with big and large donations. If you can help, or want to go, contact the CDDRT at 84, Balls Pond Road, London N1 4AJ, or phone (01) 254 0387.



• Overturning a state machine. Workers in Turkey are willing to fight back and setting their sights on making revolution

The fight for the June 15 day of action is gathering pace. On that day, the Unemployed Workers Charter along with rank and file organisations in the TGWU and other unemployed organisations is organising strike action, marches, pickets, lobbies and occupations in protest against the government's latest cheap labour scheme, Employment Training. The UWC has taken the lead in London in building for strike action and a march on this day. It has won the support of a majority of the capital's CPSA DE branches, who are now facing the imposition of ET 'trainees' in their own workplaces; of TGWU branches in east London, one with a majority of migrant workers; from campaigning organisations like City of London AA Group many of whose unemployed activists are threatened by ET; from student unions whose members are threatened by the Tories' student loans proposals; from P&O strikers who are planning to organise a contingent on the march and are also planning to set up a UWC strikers branch; from individual trade unionists, ET trainees and unemployed workers who recognise the scale of the cheap labour assault on their living standards and conditions. Make sure you are there! The march assembles outside Camden Town Hall, Bidborough Street, WC1 (nearest tube Kings Cross), June 15 – 2pm. March to rally in Red Lion Square.

## Non-appearance



We must apologise to readers for the non-appearance of *The Leninist* in May. Unfortunately our printers went bust and we had to find a new one. Of course, this has saved us the cost of printing but has also reduced the flow of donations you, our readers, have sent in. During our non-appearance we received nearly £400, £388 in fact, towards our £600 monthly fighting fund. This puts us in a healthy position for June, though it is no reason for comrades to relax their efforts. We will be doing our best to get back to and maintain a fortnightly schedule throughout the Summer months. This will include the production of our promised supplements on the *British Road to Socialism*, a new edition of *Unemployed Organiser* and the first edition of the *Hands off Ireland!* paper. There will be problems here but with your help we will do it.



**W**HAT is so amusing about working class defence? We would hope the answer will be 'nothing' from the average reader of *The Leninist*. But the very idea provokes puerile guffaws from supporters of the Euro organisation. A recent edition of their soporific and extinction-bound whinge rag, *7 Days*, told its readers about the "Genghis Khan communists" of *The Leninist*, a title clinched by the fact that we hold regular karate classes for our comrades.

Funny? Of course not. But why do we take the trouble? Is it some peculiar macho or sado-masochistic fetish, an excuse to flex our collective pecs? Hardly. We would argue that the tasks that revolutionaries are presented with in the world today demand a serious approach to discipline, working class defence and offense.

No one is going to argue that we can bring down the bourgeois state with a neatly placed karate chop, but it is certainly an asset with day to day activity of our organisation and, in terms of our determination to make revolution, it is a first step, a declaration of intent. From little acorns, and all that.

The point here, however, is a more general and fundamental one. How should communists regard the violence of the working class? The *Morning Star* seems to believe that it is only the state which has legitimate recourse to violence.

For instance, in its editorial of May 2 it states that "private citizens" should not "be allowed to keep lethal firearms in their homes ... rifles or shotguns could be held in secure police armouries until needed." This is rendered even more farcical because it follows a report of the attack on unarmed workers by armed police in Istanbul's Taksim Square, and the murder of a worker by the police. Possibly the *Star* holds the good old British bobbies in more esteem than their Turkish counterparts - a strange mix of naivety, parliamentary cretinism and straightforward chauvinism.

Leninists have no such illusions. Past struggles - distant and recent - hold many lessons, both positive and negative, from the Paris Commune to the miners' Great Strike. And those lessons certainly need to be learnt. The ruling class has learnt. It has instituted what it euphemistically calls 'robust' policing against the working class, whether they be striking trade unionists or rebellious black youth.

The official labour movement leadership is bereft of answers. It remains silent on state violence but vocally denounces workers' violence. Those in struggle, however, cannot afford the scruples of their misleaders. They spontaneously create forms of resistance. And it is the duty of communists to not only support this but take the lead and fight to take it forward as far as possible.

## Early struggles

Marx and Engels grasped early on the essence of bourgeois society in all its forms, founded on coercion and oppression, which therefore necessitated the *smashing* of the state machine by the proletariat: "In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat." (from *The Communist Manifesto*).

This civil war reached a highpoint in the Paris Commune of 1871. Marx and Engels were quick to defend the violence of the Communards. Yet in the Commune's violence there were criticisms to be made. The revolution had not gone far enough. It had not attacked with sufficient violence.

Engels mocked its critics who charged it with being authoritarian: "Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough?" (from *On Authority*). The proletarian dictatorship had been confined to Paris, where the bourgeoisie could isolate it and eventually throttle the life from it.

The defeat of the Commune led to the demise of the First International. But the lessons of this period were to be rescued by the Marxists of the Second International, founded in 1889. The International advocated the arming of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. At the now famous 1912 conference at Basle it warned that any attempt by the bourgeoisie to plunge the world into war would be met by the

revolutionary resistance of the proletariat.

History, though, proved that this formal commitment was not worth the paper it was printed on when it came to practice. Eaten away by the cancer of opportunism from within, the Second International was to abandon its own ideals just two years later. A tiny minority, lead by the Bolsheviks, were to hold to the 1912 position. The theoretical propositions of the Second International were thus to be realised only after its death, shattered by social democracy's betrayal in 1914.

The fusion of theory and practice by the minority of internationalists heralded the foundation of the Third (Communist) International. It based itself on the best elements of the Second, on what had been learned through the struggle against the imperialist war and, in particular, on the living lessons of the Bolsheviks and the October Revolution.

The three revolutions in Russia, from 1905 to October 1917, and the ensuing civil war, proved Engels' assertion that there is nothing so authoritarian as a revolution. To actually place the working class in a position where it could effectively seize state power was not a question of hoping that the arms and military skills necessary for this would fall from the skies on the day, or that the capitalists would magnanimously leave the stage of history. The duty of communists was to continually agitate for revolutionary action. For Lenin this duty was placed before communists at the very inception of the working class movement:

"To arm the people with a sense of the burning necessity to arm is the constant, common duty of the Social Democrats [ie, communists -SQ] always and everywhere, and it can be applied equally to Japan as it can to England, to Germany as it can to Italy. Wherever there are oppressed classes struggling against exploitation, the doctrine of the socialist, from the very start, and in the first place, arms them with a burning necessity to arm, and this 'necessity' is present when the labour movement begins. Social Democracy has only to make this burning necessity a conscious one, to bring home to those who are conscious of it the need for organisation and planned action, the need for considering the whole political situation."

Russia's first revolution, in 1905, showed Lenin's statement to be almost prophetic in character, as we see from his description of the unfolding events of 1905:

"It was not so very long ago that the only manifestation of the people's struggles against the autocracy were revolts -unconscious, unorganised, spontaneous, sometimes wild outbreaks. But the labour movement, as the movement of the most advanced class, the proletariat, rapidly outgrew this initial stage. The goal conscious propaganda and agitation of the Social Democrats had their effect. Disturbances gave way to organised strike struggles and political demonstrations against autocracy ... the crowds began to offer armed resistance to the tsarist troops. Real street fighting, barricade battles started between the people and the troops."

In 1917, the units of workers defence, the Red Guard, were to become the 'bodies of armed men' which stood at the core of the young soviet workers' state. Yet the 'orthodox Marxist' Mensheviks condemned such bodies as mere troublemakers. "The Mensheviks blamed it on agitation by 'Leninists' and said that the attempt to create Red Guards revealed a deplorable lack of confidence in the army." (SA Smith, *Red Petrograd*, p101). Doesn't this sound just like something you might find in the editorials of the *Morning Star*? Opportunists then, as today, when placed with a choice between the old bourgeois state and the nascent proletarian one, opt for the former.

The early Communist International generalised and fought to apply throughout the world these lessons. It demanded of its constituent national sections the same approach to the arming of the proletariat that the Bolsheviks had taken to the point of working class state power. The Red Guard of the Petrograd and Moscow soviets had been transformed into the Red Army; not the army of the Soviet state in a narrow sense, but the army of the Comintern. It was a tool of the world revolution.

The Comintern's Second Congress hailed the struggle of its army, understanding its role as the organised expression of revolutionary proletarian violence: "You are fighting not only for the interests of Soviet Russia, but for the interests of all labouring people. There is no other way the labouring masses can break the yoke of the rich and end wage slavery than by taking up arms and fighting." (*Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the*

# Defending to make r



Miners needed Workers Defence Corps

*First Four Congresses of the Third International*, p62).

It is instructive that the resolution passed by the congress after this was on the white terror in Hungary, graphically describing the butchery of the Hungarian Soviet Republic by the counterrevolution, a result of the inadequate organisation of the revolutionary violence of the Hungarian working class. The early Comintern was taught in the blood of its finest fighters the necessity of meeting counterrevolutionary violence with revolutionary violence. It learnt in struggle to apply those lessons.

The Third Congress crystallised experience into the resolution on organisation, which instructed all parties in all countries to "carry out their preparatory revolutionary work in every situation and always be on combat footing ... The legal communist parties in the capitalist countries generally have not yet sufficiently grasped that it is their task to understand how the party should properly arm itself for revolutionary uprisings, for armed struggle or for illegal struggle in general. The entire party organisation is built much too one sidedly on an enduring legality and is organised according to the requirements of legal day to day tasks ... Every legal communist party must know how to ensure maximum combat readiness if it should have to go underground, and it must be armed particularly for the outbreak of revolutionary uprisings ... The entire party should be trained as a combat organisation for the revolution." (*Guidelines on the organisational structure of communist parties, on the methods and content of their work*, Prometheus Research Library translation pp51-2)

Acceptance and implementation of this resolution was a condition of Comintern membership. Can you see pretenders to the mantle of communism such as the Euros, NCP or CPB taking this on? Or, come to that, radical left appendages of Labourism such as the

SWP? The need was certainly around then, and is still here today. A genuine communist organisation must prepare well in advance of class to class clashes. To do otherwise was and is to await defeat.

## 1920s: Germany and Britain

The class battles in Germany during the Weimar Republic produced many lessons. Rosa Luxemburg encapsulated the tasks of the German revolution when, attacking the German opportunists, she stated: "The 'civil war' that they are trying to banish from the revolution cannot be banished. For civil war is just another word for class struggle, and the idea of trying to introduce socialism without class struggle, by parliamentary decision, is a ridiculous petty bourgeois illusion."

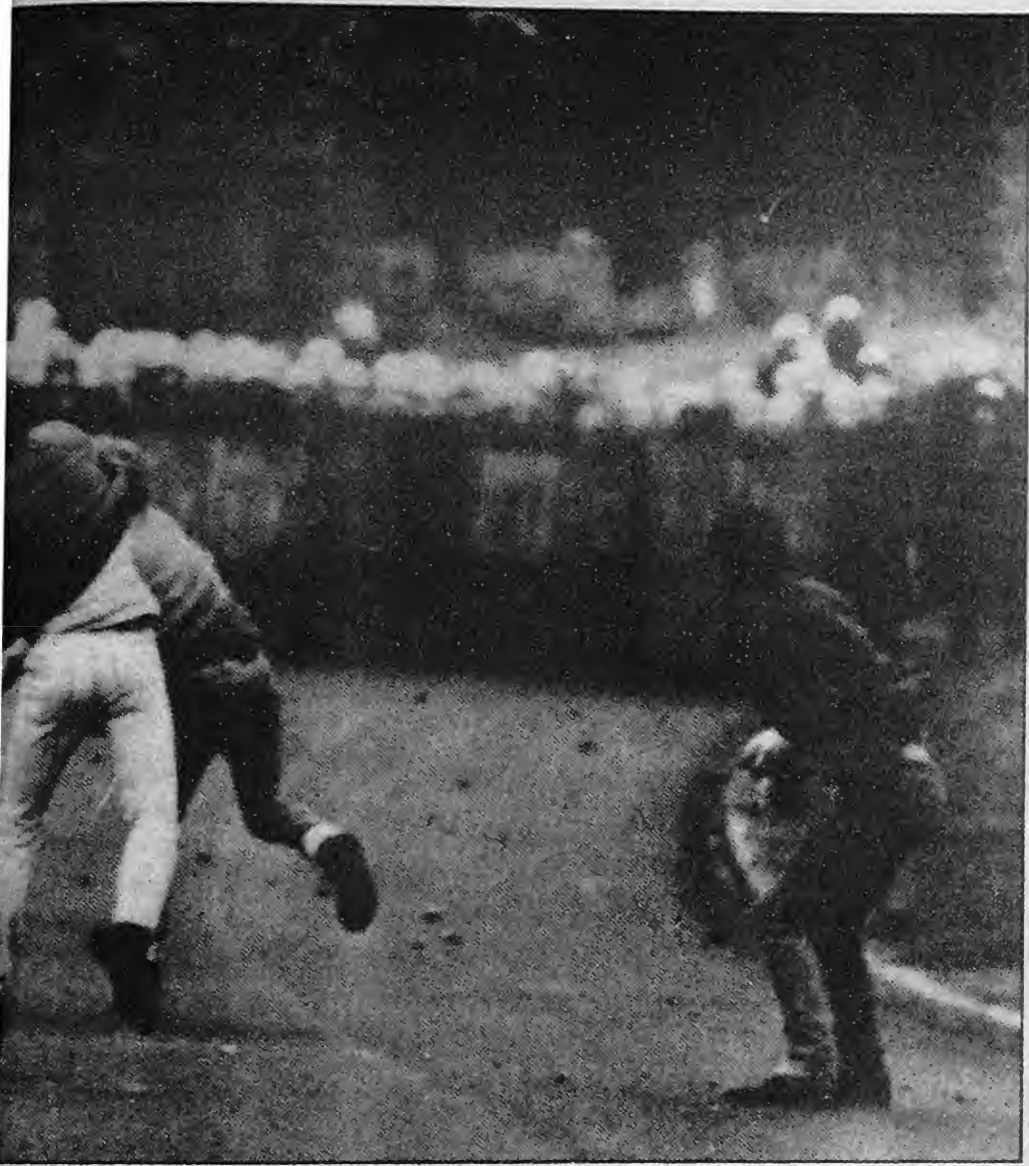
This was tragically proven when she and Karl Liebknecht were murdered with the crushing of the 1919 German revolution by a social democratic government. Again, this tragically showed the immaturity of proletarian forces - centrally, the development of soviets and militias under communist leadership - at that time.

The revolutionary working class in Germany was confronted not only by the army and police but also by the fascist Stahlhelm and, after 1922, the Nazi's Sturmabteilung (SA Brownshirts). Against this the working class threw up its own military organisations. The social democrats proved unable to lead such defence. Their fighting formation, the Reichsbanner, played a low level role, paralysed by political indecision and rapidly became little more than a drinking club. The task of revolutionary workers defence fell to the communists.

Organisations led by the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) played a central role in



# Our right evolution



combatting both fascism and the state. Armed fighting formations, such as the Proletarian Hundreds, the Red Front Fighters League and the Kampfbund, defended working class communities, demonstrations and organisations.

Street battles were commonplace during the 1920s and early 30s, well apart from the failed revolutions of 1919 and 1923. Communist fighting units were built up among factory workers and the unemployed. They were a fusion of the political leadership of the KPD with the basic desire of young workers to respond to the threat to their freedom posed by the fascists and police. Without them the most basic defence of working class districts would have been impossible.

The KPD fought to transform this defensive response into an offensive, class wide, upsurge. "The aim of the KPD was always to transform the culture of self-defence into an offensive revolutionary movement, and its efforts so to politicise its own membership were reflected in challenges to the categories in which its members thought (as on the question of sexual roles) as well as the more common exhortations to action. In Berlin, a sustained practice of mass terror under communist leadership would arguably have presented such a breakthrough. Among the reasons why this did not happen we can count the elements of unclarity and inconsistency in the Party line itself, including a readiness on the part of KPD leaders and propagandists to appeal directly to the simple urge to 'put the boot in'." (Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and political violence 1929-1933*, p209)

The opportunist and sectarian line of the KPD during the so-called 'Third Period' prevented it from organising the spontaneous actions of communist and non-communist workers against the fascists. It ruled out any serious confrontation with the state — the logical outcome of such wide ranging re-

sistance — because of the weakness of the fighting units. The flaw in the KPD's organisation of violence was that it was unable to organise it to the level of insurrection.

The 'Third Period' line left the organisation of workers' violence at the level of localised defence, or, as Rosenhaft aptly says, 'putting the boot in'. She makes the point that, whereas this was adequate for local defence against the Nazi gangs, it could not stand up against the state forces. Little work, it seems, was done here.

When the state fell into the hands of the Nazis, the consequences were tragic. The German experience shows both the necessity of working class violence and that it *must* be organised under the leadership of a Communist Party which consistently and scientifically takes up the revolutionary tasks facing it. In Germany it was the line of the Party which must take the blame for the eventual defeat, not the lack of combativeness of the masses.

All over Europe similar formations were created under communist leadership. Then, of course, there was the precursive Irish Citizen Army of James Connolly, formed in 1913 and called by Trotsky, founder of the Red Army, Europe's first red guard. Far more starkly than the German events, it showed the necessity of the leadership of a Communist Party when it was defeated in the 1916 Easter Rising.

Even Britain during this period provided examples of workers' militias. The best example of this can be seen during the General Strike of 1926. Against the forces of the state and the 'irregular' scabs of the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, the militant working class created its own defence formations.

The young Communist Party of Great Britain played a pivotal role in this, not only during, but also before the strike: "Workers' Defence Corps or Workers' Police was one of the forms of organisation for which the

Communist Party had continuously campaigned in the course of the months preceding the strike. Such organisations developed above all around the militant effective Councils of Action in which communists and other militants were particularly active." (James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, Vol 2, p153)

Unfortunately, this was achieved in too few areas during the course of the strike. But there were outstanding examples. In Methyl Fife, the growth of the defence corps were recorded at the time: "After police charges on mass pickets, the Defence Corps, which 150 workers had joined at the outset, was reorganised. Its numbers rose to 700, of whom 400, commanded by workers who had been NCOs during the war, marched in military formation through the town to protect the picket. The police did not interfere again." (*Workers Weekly*, June 11 1926)

The lack of such formations was identified as an important factor by our CPGB in its postmortem on the failure of the General Strike. The omnipresent need for these bodies was emphasised by the Party. However, the following decade was to see its slide into opportunism. Consequently, such decisions were left to gather dust.

## That was then...

There are always those who will sagaciously inform us that much time has passed since then, as if this in itself were enough to bring our arguments crashing down around our ears. But if we look at the progression of political struggles through the eighties it is quite clear that, rather than the workers' militias advocated by communists in the twenties receding in importance for today, they are being forced back onto the agenda by the growing harsh realities of the class struggle in 'Thatcher's Britain'.

High-tech riot gear has become commonplace for the police through the past decade. The old push and shove approach, which cost the state dear at Saltley Gates, has been abandoned. Riot shields, water cannon and CS gas are now par for the course. At Broadwater Farm in 1985 plastic bullet guns appeared for the first time on British streets. The Dixon of Dock Green style policing is dead and buried, if it ever existed. We can learn from the use of this armoury, and reaction to it from the working class, over the past few years.

The high point of this so far has been the miners' Great Strike. This provided — for those with the ability to learn — a year of intense struggle where militants were thrown directly against the forces of the state. Police sealed off whole counties with road check points, and carried out military style occupations of mining communities. Highly disciplined and organised, they tooled up to the mines and tore through miners' picket lines at Orgreave and in many other places. Miners in shirt sleeves, jeans and trainers were pitted against something looking as if it had walked out of Doctor Who.

After the strike the book *State of Siege* commented that "a National Riot Force has been developed and deployed in England. This force is trained in paramilitary strategies and is equipped with riot weapons. The lessons which this force is putting into practice are those learnt in the north of Ireland since 1968" (p56).

It is no accident that the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police at the time, Sir Kenneth Newman, was RUC Chief Constable prior to this. Unchallenged by the vast majority of the British working class, British imperialism had exercised its repressive might against the Irish. Now the war comes to Britain.

But the filth did not have it all their own way. Not only did miners and their supporters fight back with inspiring tenacity on the picket lines, sections went way beyond this. Miners from as far afield as Kent and Methyl Fife formed hit squads against the police and scabs.

These started off as small groups organised for guerilla style attacks on the police and scabs. In certain areas they developed beyond this, with larger groups attempting to take on the police through set piece engagements. On one occasion, in Yorkshire, miners blocked a bridge with an earth mover to prevent a scab getting into work. The scab and his escort of five car loads of police turned up, found their way blocked. When they got out to move the obstruction, around sixty miners broke from cover and pelted the police with iron bolts. Maggie's finest were forced to retreat and the

scab failed to get in. Other hit squads attempted to organise on, and defend, the picket lines.

Such events had a morale boosting effect on many militants and provided examples which could have and should have been emulated and developed. The fact that this was not done was not a little due to the weakness of Leninist forces in the strike and the anaemic nature of the vast majority of the British left.

An eloquent example of this was the cowardly performance of the Socialist Workers Party. For its leader, Tony Cliff, the most protracted mass strike in European history was "an extreme form of the downturn" (*Socialist Review*, April 1984). Any attempt to take the strike forward, therefore, was actively and consciously sabotaged by this pessimistic sect.

*Socialist Worker* attacked the actions of the hit squads as "individual acts" (December 7 1984). The SWP's appraisal of the strike, in Alex Callinicos' and Mike Simons' book *The Great Strike*, dismissed the hit squads as they "were not a substitute for mass picketing ... they weren't a substitute for real solidarity" (p194). But the biggest mass picket, Orgreave, was smashed by the police because it was not adequately organised and defended by working class fighting formations — hit squads taken to the level of militias.

It is easier to convince workers to take solidarity action when they are standing with a body of workers who can look after themselves, rather than get their heads split open. You win support and solidarity when you are strong.

Again, in the Wapping strike, militant printers organised into fighting formations not only to be more effective on the picket line, but off it also. Buses shipping scabs into the plant were wrecked in their depots. Stores of paper for Wapping were set ablaze. This sort of combative approach of the miners and printers will no doubt be reproduced in other struggles, whenever workers come up against the state and its collaborators.

We can be sure that in the future the stakes, and consequently the forms of action, will be raised well above those reached during the course of the Great Strike. This is a must for the ruling class — it cannot afford to give. And violent resistance is therefore a must for workers if they are to defend their existing positions, let alone advance to conquer new ones.

To work to their greatest effect, our fighting formations must have at their head a general staff — the general staff of the working class. This can only be a Communist Party. That provided both the cutting edge and the direction to the Red Guard in Russia, the PLA in China, the Vietminh and NLF in Vietnam and, on a lower level, the Workers Defence Corps of 1926 led by our CPGB.

Spontaneous formations left at that level will eventually be defeated. The armed workers of the Italian factory occupations of 1920 were eventually crushed because they lacked the conscious communist guidance to go beyond occupations of their particular factory or area to the level of dual, and then victorious state, power. Little more needs to be said of the Easter Rising.

The dominant ideas in any class society are the ideas of the ruling class. Even in revolutionary periods, where the working class is literally 'up in arms' it will still reflect many of those ideas, such as narrow forms of trade union consciousness or other forms of sectionalism. It will suffer from the lack of co-ordinated national action. It is only a genuine Communist Party which can be free from the shackles of bourgeois ideology; only a genuine Communist Party can provide a national strategy of revolutionary action. The working class cannot win unarmed. But its most powerful arm is its communist party. Without that, even bristling with AK47s, it cannot win.

The task of communists in Britain today is to build just such a Party — a combat organisation of the working class. We Leninists realise that organisationally we lag woefully far behind what is demanded in the class struggle. But we are the only organisation in Britain with a commitment to change that. Look around for another — you won't find one.

What we have organisationally is a start. Ideologically our ideas have been tested not only in the miners' Great Strike and other class battles in Britain throughout the '80s but, in different ways, throughout the world, not least by our comrades in the Communist Party of Turkey. They have been proven right.

We have no apologies to make for our combative perspective, only a demand: if you're serious about revolution, join us!

Sean Quinn





The Irish Freedom Movement has the same keen eye for packaging as its parent organisation, the RCP. Recently though, in a letter to its supporters advertising upcoming events, one could not but get the impression that some of the hype might be a little misplaced. Eager IFMers were tempted to "a day of fun that will highlight different [Irish] events that have taken place in London". Part of the 'fun' will be a trip past "Brixton prison (where Terrence MacSweeney died on hunger strike)". Which, talking of hunger, will be followed by a picnic in Hyde Park. Ah, the unbridled jollity of it all. Somewhere on high MacSweeney is probably chuckling along too. Saatchi and Saatchi meets "time to end the Irish War"?

That salty old gravy boat, the New Communist Party - the organisation that seems to have more fulltimers than activists (the two don't necessarily equate) - has, we hear, a slight problem. Unconfirmed reports are rumouring through certain east London pubs that the CPs have ended the cheques. Rumours circulating that the IWC plans to set up a special section for unemployed - NCP followers have been vigorously denied.

More proof of the fact that the Eros of the Communist Party are drifting apart in the terms more recently when ACTT official Peter Awt - Division CPOM member and ex-Moving Star fulltime - was pushed through to announce to the world via the press of 7 Days that in the next election he would be going 'Green' - ie voting for the open-toed sandal brigade of the Green Party. Never mind what 'outsiders' like the leadership of his own party might decide party members should vote for. Nice of Peter, still a 'party' member as far as we are aware, to let the rest of his organisation know, really.

The WRP Workers Press (yes, they're still around) in the May 27 edition of their paper, are so moved by the events in China that they are looking round for a few bob to send one of their people to China. This, you will be pleased to learn, presents "even greater opportunities for rebuilding the Fourth International". We presume that this means that the WRP may not shrink and split as fast as it has hitherto done. What with the WRP off to China and the Sparts legging it to Afghanistan (sic), we'll soon be stuck for native Trots to have a chuckle at.

## IRELAND

# Sectarians and hypocrites

Because of its Labourism and fear of Leninism, the Trotskyite Workers Power organisation refused to back the founding statement of HoI! The following two letters only compound its original opportunism

## Anti-imperialist contingent:

The August 12 Demonstration Mobilising Committee has decided to make the slogans for the demo: British withdrawal from Ireland, Time to go.

This was supported by the SWP, LCI, TTG, Connolly Association and Labour Party Irish Sections. Workers Power sees this as an adaptation to the politics of the 'Time To Go' campaign which panders to chauvinist 'withdrawal' sentiments based on British self interest. Under the guise of "examining all the options for withdrawal" it refuses to openly state that Britain is responsible for the war in Ireland and has no progressive role to play. Nor is it willing to support the basic internationalist position of self determination for the Irish people as a whole.

At the LCI conference in February a resolution, amended by Workers Power, was passed calling for the building of the "largest possible anti-imperialist withdrawal contingent on the march ... mobilising in particular in the labour movement and Irish community in Britain ... on the basis of Troops out now, Britain out of Ireland, Self determination for the Irish people". The LCI now refuses to implement this resolution.

Since then Workers Power has

been seeking to liaise with other organisations around the building of a contingent. To date, several organisations have agreed to march under the slogans Troops out now, Self determination. They include the ISG, TOM, IBRG and the RIL. However, it has not been possible to get agreement on the need to produce leaflets and posters to advertise the contingent and explain why we believe it was necessary to build a separate anti-imperialist contingent from the official banner of British withdrawal from Ireland, Time To Go.

Workers Power is willing to continue to discuss with any groups interested in building such a contingent .... We are happy to keep other groups informed of the work we are doing to mobilise for the demo and to cooperate in jointly producing national leaflets, posters, placards and a banner for the day.

We have therefore organised a meeting for May 25 at 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square to assist in this coordination.

Please bring any amendment/s/alternative drafts to our mobilising leaflet/resolution plus ideas and suggestions for joint work.

**Breda Concannon**  
For Workers Power

## 'Bemusement'

I note with bemusement your report in the latest *Leninist* (No77, April 10) of a conversation I supposedly had with one of your comrades.

Since you obviously have space for such trivia I can only hope that you can make room for a statement from *Workers Power* which accurately outlines our position with regard to 'Hands off Ireland'.

Workers Power attended the first meeting called by *The Leninist* on August 16 1988 to organise an anti-imperialist contingent on the 'Time To Go' national demonstration. On arriving at the meeting we were presented with a draft statement which announced the launching of a new solidarity campaign called 'Hands off Ireland'.

Workers Power argued that the only way to test whether the basis of such a new campaign existed was around concrete actions not abstract organisational unity. We presented an alternative statement to the following meeting in which we proposed that we:

... prioritise an orientation to the organised labour movement on the basis of 'Troops Out Now! Self determination for the Irish people'. We [will] mobilise support in the trade unions and in the Labour Party wards for the delegate conference in November and the national demonstration next August on a clear anti-imperialist basis. We [will]

campaign against the introduction of any new 'security moves' including proposals to make the PTA permanent."

*The Leninist's* objections centred on the false idea that we were demanding that all forces involved would have to work in the Labour Party. We were not but we did insist that any campaign recognise the Labour Party as an important area in which to fight - against the Labour leadership and among its activists for anti-imperialist politics.

It became clear that agreement to form a new organisation was not forthcoming. Faced with this it was Workers Power who proposed that we should return to the original aim - which was to organise an anti-imperialist contingent on the August demo. You, comrades, chose to ignore this proposal.

The dishonesty of *The Leninist's* version of what happened at these meetings has been confirmed by all other groups present including the IRSP who you claimed had endorsed your initiative.

In *Starry Plough* No4 the IRSP state that "this was not the case as the IRSP have reservations about the way a supposedly multi-group initiative actually manifested itself as a purely *Leninist* affair".

**Keith Hassell**  
Workers Power

Alan Merrik replies:

We were most surprised when we read Workers Power's draft for their May 25 meeting. It was almost exactly the same as the Hands off Ireland! founding statement which Workers Power voted against last September. What are they up to?

Since last year *The Leninist* has been campaigning for an anti-imperialist contingent on the 'Time To Go' demo on August 12 under the banners of Hands off Ireland! We have won the support of militants in Ireland such as the IRSP (who, Keith Hassell - a leader of Workers Power - so conveniently omits, urged support for HoI! in the article he quotes), John Mitchell, and individuals and organisations in Britain, without who the recent Hands off Ireland! John Mitchell speaking tour could not have been built.

Now Workers Power decide they don't want to be left behind. Do they join Hands off Ireland!, an open, democratic anti-imperialist campaign whose slogans they claim to agree with and which was created to build the anti-imperialist contingent they say they want? No, they try and set up their own organisation.

They have, they imply, a cosy relationship with the Irish in Britain Representation Group and the Troops Out Movement. But neither of these organisations

bothered to turn up to the Workers Power meeting in May (the two tiny Trotskyite organisations that did could not agree with the Workers Power draft). The position of IBRG and TOM does not surprise us. Rejection of the 'TTG' slogans in no way means a turn to principled anti-imperialism, which would mean challenging Labourism. If Workers Power had any integrity they would stop trying to bask in a little borrowed 'prestige' from these two larger organisations. But maybe that is asking too much.

It is interesting that Workers Power's new 'draft leaflet' contains no references to trade unions or working in the Labour Party. Yet, when attending the inaugural meetings of HoI!, they demanded that the meeting accept an alternative draft statement prioritising "an orientation to the organised labour movement" with a commitment to "mobilise support in the trade unions and Labour Party wards." The absence of such stipulations prevented *Workers Power* from supporting the original founding statement of the campaign.

Hassell argues that our resolution only offered "abstract organisational unity". But if this is true, then theirs is equally as guilty, since its content is almost identical. Frankly, if we had copyrighted the original they would now be severely infringing the rel-

evant laws.

Hassell goes on to argue that it was Workers Power who proposed an anti-imperialist contingent, against *The Leninist* which was aiming for some sort of 'IFM Mark II'. Frankly he is either badly misinformed or dishonest. Quite possibly he is both. We have argued consistently for an anti-imperialist contingent on August 12, no more no less. Workers Power "proposed" nothing on this, as it was the sole concern of the discussion right the way through.

Actions speak louder than words. While Workers Power has waded further into the Labourite swamp, buried itself in endless and pointless committee room politicising Hands off Ireland! has got on with the job.

To publicise the anti-imperialist contingent on August 12 it has organised a national speaking tour featuring John Mitchell, the sacked general secretary of the Irish trade union, Idatu. It has also mobilised a militant contingent on the Hunger Strike Commemoration in Birmingham which protested against the sectarian exclusion of the IRSP. Besides that HoI! engages in street work every week, it fights for support in the trade unions, intervenes in 'Time To Go' and associated public meetings. It has produced high quality publicity material for August 12 and the anti-imperialist contingent and will

soon begin publishing a paper. So much for "abstract organisational unity".

Workers Power, on the other hand, now seems intent on *splitting* the fight for a united anti-imperialist contingent on August 12. This is the height of sectarianism and hypocrisy. But what conceivable reason could they have for such a despicable action? If we had to take a guess, we would say it is to seal off their supporters from the influence of *The Leninist*. What other reason could there be for setting up a shallow doppelganger of an existing campaign than to provide an ostensibly 'principled' excuse not to work with Leninist and other principled anti-imperialist comrades.

*Workers Power's* silly factional posturing is an insult to revolutionaries in Ireland who have been fighting against the British occupation of their country for the past two decades. In all sincerity we urge Workers Power to reconsider its position on HoI! Join it, work for it ... and, yes, argue in it. Failing that, the honest militants in Workers Power - whom we respect and have worked with on more than one occasion - should give short shrift to their leaders' hypocritical machinations and join with Hands off Ireland! in building the anti-imperialist contingent on August 12.



# Theatre in a graveyard

**Ghetto**, Nicholas Hytner (director), National Theatre

THE Vilna Ghetto was established by the Germans after they invaded Soviet Lithuania in June 1941. Of Vilna's (now Vilnius) population of 200,000 some 80,000 were Jewish. With the aid of Lithuanian fascists — the Pamyat of their day — the Germans began to systematically annihilate them. When the Jews were hurled into two ghettos 36,000 were killed. From there on in it was only a matter of time before the 'final solution', which for Vilna came in September 1943. Fewer than 600 survived.

Joshua Sobol's politically flawed but magnificent play draws on the diaries, songs and eye witness accounts of those who experienced the life and death of this ghetto. It is a story of horror, humiliation and heroism which speaks not only for Jews but humanity the world over.

The central theme of the play is that of schizophrenia and the contradiction between resistance and destruction or collaboration and survival. To survive, some Jews resisted, others collaborated. But this was no either/or straightforward question. Collaboration was seen by many as the only realistic way to survive. To openly resist was to provoke automatic mass killings by the Nazis. Yet, as Sobol shows, to collaborate might have slowed down Hitler's plans to liquidate the Jews but it also facilitated it. There were no easy answers. Only the foolish or the downright hypocritical would suggest otherwise.

Many playwrights have dealt with Jewish resistance and the terrible price the Nazis exacted. A few have dared touch upon the systematic collaboration of Jewish leaders — not least Zionists — with the Grossdeutsche Reich. Sobol, for all the political faults of his play, does both. As an Israeli Jew, this takes great courage. It is no wonder that he has found himself the butt of attacks by the Zionist establishment.

Originally Sobol thought he could say nothing new about the holocaust. It had been, in his own words, "overexposed". Then he discovered the Vilna Ghetto and the slogan: "No theatre in a graveyard". This grabbed him. Yes, the Vilna Ghetto had a theatre and with it Sobol found his dramatic device.

*Ghetto* is in many senses a play within a play, or at least a series of sketches within a play. Sobol incorporates the cabaret art, the humour and the music of the ghetto into his story of resistance and terror. This is not out of place. Quite the reverse. The biting satire, heart rending songs and wicked jokes of the theatre of Vilna became a form of resistance, allowing the Jews to mock their oppressors, reaffirm their humanity and determination to preserve their culture.

Director Nicholas Hytner has done an outstanding job with this raw material. His caste is large, well rehearsed and well chosen. Each plays a named Vilna ghetto individual throughout which allows all sorts of sub plots and undercurrents. Hytner interweaves Vilna Theatre with his own theatre and uses its art and humour to alter the emotional pitch. From fear it takes us to laughter, from disgust to rage, from despair to hope. Particularly crucial here is Djigan, the

ventriloquist's dummy, played by Linda Kerr Scott. This crippled, half human puppet with its subversive and dangerous jokes seems to symbolise Sobol's idea of the schizophrenic Jews; manipulated and oppressed but capable of the greatest beauty. But if there is a symbol for a truly schizophrenic people it must be Kittel, played by Alex Jennings.

Kittel the German SS officer in charge of the ghetto was an artist and a cold blooded murderer. He strutted round the ghetto saxophone in one hand, machine gun in the other. Kittel loved the Jews and their artistic abilities yet coolly presided over genocide, loved their music and without compunction could snuff out its human source.

The schizophrenia in *Ghetto* is reinforced by the unity of resistance and collaboration in the ghetto. John Woodvine's Jacob Gens, the Jewish police chief, personifies those who thought that the best way to ensure the survival of their people was to collaborate. Gens was in no way pro-Nazi. He was no small time version of Quisling, Mussert or Petain. Neither was he a weak kneed coward. In fact he was a brave and clever man. A committed Zionist, he used one contrivance after another to cheat the German death machine — including establishing a theatre, which would enable its actors etc, to get the work permits which allowed one to stay alive in the ghetto.

In Sobol's play many arguments are directed against Gens. Based on a solid grasp of the realities within the ghetto Gens defeats them all. And yet for all that there can be no question whatsoever that in the end he loses. The ghetto is liquidated.

But then who does Sobol pit against Gens? Herman Kruk the Bundist and Weiskopf the capitalist. They are easy opponents. Kruk is an idealist who keeps his hands clean. Gens is a doer who knows he will burn in hell. Kruk coins the slogan: "No theatre in the graveyard". Gens keeps people alive. Weiskopf is more concerned with making himself indispensable to the German war effort and making money than with saving lives.

Yet while it is perfectly legitimate to try and understand the collaboration of Zionists like Gens, it is another thing to get us to identify with it. Sobol certainly does not present, at least in this play, any real alternative. Perhaps this fault is made up for in Sobol's *Adam*, the related play on the Vilna Ghetto dealing with the resistance movement? Even if it is though, Sobol lets Gens off far too lightly. Admitting Zionist collaboration is one thing, showing that there was a correct alternative in the form of the armed struggle (in which Jews and communists collaborated) is another. It is true that Hayyah the singer, played by Maria Freidman, joins the resistance, but this comes over as an isolated act which brings down the heavens.

Given what we know today about the state of Israel the moral sympathy *Ghetto* has for Zionism is no small matter. From being an ideology of the oppressed, Zionism has become a bigoted ideology of the oppressors. This is not to equate the Nazi holocaust with the Israeli terror against the Palestinians. Nonetheless the reactionary nature of Zionism was clear from the beginning. It put down the persecution of the Jews to an almost congenital and automatic hatred by non-Jews rather than their special and vulnerable class-people position in European society.

Zionism found a mirror image in the sick ideology of Nazism. Sobol is well aware of this. He gets the

German 'specialist' in Jewish literature, Doctor Paul, (adding to the schizophrenia played by Alex Jennings, who also plays Kittel) to echo the Zionist conviction that Jews have always been persecuted and would always be persecuted by non-Jews. Paul urges Kruk to seek freedom in Palestine not in socialism.

As this shows, in spite of its softness towards Zionism *Ghetto* is no Zionist play. It shows us how fascist ideology turns cultured people into monsters, it shows us the awful choices oppressors force upon the oppressed. In spite of the horrors it depicts, the essential message is one of confidence in mankind. Even the Behemoth of the ghetto cannot crush its will to survive.

Jack Conrad

## Black power roots

Robert A Hill and Barbara Blair. *Marcus Garvey: life and lessons*. University of California Press, California 1987. pp451

READERS who commit themselves to reading this tome should be under no illusions. It ranks high on my list of the most dry and lifeless books that I have had the misfortune to read in a long while. But as a record of class collaboration and black separatism, Marcus Garvey's writing on the state, communism and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), brought together in this volume provides an invaluable warning.

Marcus Garvey's life, like his writings, was an eclectic mishmash of utopian dreams, failed projects and disappointment. The most well known of these was UNIA. Founded by Garvey in 1914 in Jamaica, it was based on the model of the Zionist movement. UNIA attempted to unite blacks all over the world of every class in a movement whose main aim was "returning to Africa".

Garvey's separatist project was a petty bourgeois reaction to the deep rooted racism of the British colonial authorities in the West Indies and among a wide swathe of the white population in the USA — particularly in the southern old slave states. But it was in the industrial north where his ideas found the greatest resonance. Indeed his UNIA soon became a mass movement. The black masses responded enthusiastically to Garvey's calls for equality and liberation. This is what gives Garveyism its significance.

In this light Garvey's ideas were those of the oppressed. Yet, while they were grand, they were also comic, tragic and misguided. Garvey appointed his own 'African government', ministers, ambassadors, the lot. Farcically, they posed for the camera in their 'official uniforms' of state. This was comic. His businesses quickly collapsed amid widespread accusations of corruption and straightforward incompetence. Tens, even hundreds of thousands, invested in his black capitalist schemes like the Black Star shipping line. With its collapse many working class blacks lost all their life's savings. This was tragic. Above all, though, instead of looking for a united front of all oppressed forces Garvey actually looked to his oppressors for liberation. This was misguided.

Essentially he was a Fabian. He wanted to appeal to the goodwill of 'thinking men', ie, the ruling class,

to concede reforms.

One finds plenty of evidence of his illusions in the capitalist state. For example, in spite of the rampant corruption and vicious racism of the US plutocracy and its state he naively repeated the Benthamian myth that society is "intended to maintain the greatest good for the greatest number." Even more remarkable, given the strong connections between the 'forces of law and order' in the southern states of the USA and the Ku Klux Klan, is the following passage: "Always adopt a friendly attitude to the police in your community. The police is the civil body of officials who are supposed to protect the citizens and see that their right is not infringed upon ... The police are never the public enemy, but the public protector."

Obviously, Garvey's prostration before the police force was no 'slip', no misunderstanding of its true role, but a petty bourgeois attempt to pander to the capitalist state. For Garvey, any suggestion of class struggle had to be rebuffed. His black power was safe, and to prove it he emphasised that both his project for blacks in America (and in other countries) and his long term project for the African continent did not question capitalist property rights. The opposite was the case.

Garvey saw himself as the future leader of a capitalist Africa and the creator of a black capitalist class. Hence, far from pointing a finger at capitalism as the root cause of the oppression of the black people on a world scale, Garvey actually pointed to capitalism as the only avenue for the black race to secure emancipation.

Through striving to gain 'self respect' by getting rich, Garvey argued, blacks would uplift themselves as a race and, in time, they would be granted their rightful place alongside other races of the world.

Quite clearly black power is little different from the other separatist ideologies we have seen in the twentieth century like feminism, Zionism and nationalism. These ideas can broadly speaking take two forms, revolutionary or reformist. Garveyism was, as we have seen, reformist to the marrow.

Objectively therefore, although it won itself a mass following, the strategy of Garveyism held back the struggle of the black working class by tying it hand and foot to a proto black bourgeoisie and to the wider capitalist social order. Every attempt was made by the Garveyite movement to undermine calls for the unity of black and white workers. For the Garveyites any prospect of the black working class finding common cause with the organised white working class

was cause for concern. One need only turn to Garvey's writings on communism to see how seriously the threat of unity was perceived.

For a supposedly sophisticated writer and theorist, as the editors of this work would have us believe, one finds the most transparent apology for capitalism and the most crude attempt at divide and rule. The following slander illuminates this point well: "The man who caught your forefathers in Africa was not the white capitalist, but the white sailor who is a class of man from whom communists are made. He is dangerous to the Negro's liberty ... so never join him to destroy the intelligence that rules the civilization that has given you existence up to the present time."

It is easy to dismiss such rubbish as a mere historical relic. This would be a mistake. The fact is that Garveyism finds adherents in the quangoised black middle class. One example is the Black Sections of the Labour Party. Whilst on one level representing a frustration at the inherently racist nature of the Labour Party itself, the party of immigration controls, etc the Black Sections, like the Garvey they so much admire, base themselves on deeply reactionary politics.

In essence the Black Sections are a vehicle for aspiring petty bourgeois blacks. In the name of defending black rights and black autonomy (ie, separatism) they attack those who advocate class politics and dismiss them as 'liberals'. Unaware of the irony, it is they who defend the capitalist state and urge blacks to join a party which they openly admit is racist.

The reason for this is simple. From the Labour Party they do their best to expand what has come to be known as the 'race relations industry'. This does bugger all for the mass of black workers and if anything exacerbates racism. But it does open up a career ladder for a tiny minority which allows (hence advisors, local government executive officers, councillors and, yes, MPs. But what do they do when they get there? Like their white colleagues they sack workers, break strikes and do their best to maintain illusions in the British capitalist state by suggesting that blacks will advance themselves through it.

For communists, separatism is a danger that must be fought and combatted in the working class movement. Like all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois trends, black separatism stands as a block to the unity of the working class. Communists must fight the twin evils of racism and separatism in the working class movement in order to smash capitalism, the true source of racism and separatism.

Charles Anderson

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# THE LENINIST

**For communists May Day is the most important day of the year. Our organisation regards it as a key test of its politics, innovation, militancy and commitment to the future**



Fighting for the future

## May Day '89



Banners and flags flying

**M**AY DAY – international workers' day – is of the greatest importance for our organisation. May Day 1989 showed this to the full. The weekend leading up to May 1 was used by *The Leninist* to the full, and May Day itself was celebrated with befitting internationalism, discipline and militant joy. We brought together comrades and friends for a school around the theme of 'Reform or Revolution', staged a 50 strong rally, attended the May Day celebrations of our fraternal comrades of the Communist Party of Turkey and organised the largest British political contingent on the London May Day march.



•The weekend school was a great

success. Divided in four sessions, two on Gorbachevism, the others on Thatcherism and 1992, it provided a useful opportunity to debate some of the central issues facing revolutionaries today. Every opportunity was given for comrades to raise differences and as a result on occasion discussion was – as is normal within our organisation – sharp. Far from this leading to fragmentation it enabled us to sort out a few ideological problems and go on to cement our unity. All comrades learnt, all comrades went away with their Leninist convictions strengthened.



Comrades from Turkey turned out in huge numbers

•Many comrades attended the 400 strong rally organised by the Communist Party of Turkey on April 29. A packed hall heard comrade Yurukoglu speak on the tasks of the working class in Turkey and in particular the necessity to defend the Alevi religious minority. The size, militancy and efficiency of the rally was impressive, particularly to those comrades new to our organisation or who, because they live in Scotland or the far north of

England, had not been able to attend a CPT rally before.



Rally: standing ovation

•The *Leninist* rally on Sunday April 30 was intended as a launch pad for our contingent on the London May Day march and a celebration of proletarian internationalism. As well as speakers from the Unemployed Workers Charter and *The Leninist* we were pleased to welcome fraternal comrades onto our platform.



The rally started with a minutes silence in memory of Bedir Aydemir, a leading and much loved CPT comrade who had a tremendous influence on the development of

our organisation and its politics. After hearing about the UWC's plans for June 15 the rally heard speeches from the CPT, the Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran (Rah-e Kargar) and John Mitchell, ex-general secretary of the Irish Distributive and Allied Trades Union. The final speaker was from the editorial board of *The Leninist*. This comrade damned the treachery of Gorbachevism and pointed out, using the examples of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and the Italian Communist Party, that the 'official communist' movement was increasingly oriented towards the bourgeoisie. The comrade confidently predicted that, just as the Third International was born out of the ruins of the Second International, a new International would emerge from the disintegration of the 'official communist' movement. All comrades were given enthusiastic standing ovations.



Workers Theatre: salutes May Day

•The Workers Theatre Movement gave three performances of 'May Day 1989' over the weekend. As it was written by one of our comrades it was fitting that the first performance was at our rally. Drawing on the agitprop techniques of the 1930s it deals with the origins and contemporary significance of May Day. Appropriately the sketch ended with the *Internationale* with our entire rally rising to sing.



Our contingent: disciplined, organised and militant

•Our contingent on the London May Day march was far larger than any other British political organisation. It was also by far the most militant. Marching in disciplined formation, marching with revolutionary slogans on their lips and marching with red banners and



Veterans as well as youth

flags flying our comrades stood for the future, for how May Day should be marked, for how communists should organise. We put to shame the shambling excuses that pass for left organisations in Britain, not least the Euro, CPB and NCP 'official communists'. We were the genuine communists.

•Forward to May Day 1990  
•Forward to the reformed Communist Party of Great Britain

Rhian Morgan